

2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: Do Not Miss the Opportunity to Get Involved!

Outline

EFC representatives took part in the second meeting of the **EU Stakeholders Expert Group on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)** on 17 September 2009. The group aims to provide a platform for a regular exchange of views and information between the European Commission and EU stakeholders –including EU civil society organisations (CSOs) and individual foundations- on the design, implementation, follow-up and assessment of the European Year.

The EFC secretariat is analysing the opportunities to give visibility and promote EFC members and foundations' work in the context of the activities that will be organised at EU level, notably the Focus Weeks. We would like to invite you to contact the EFC secretariat at eu@efc.be if:

- You are already or planning to get involved in the activities of the European year both at national and EU level (organising your own activities, working with the National Implementing Bodies or with other stakeholders, etc.).
- You are interested in getting involved in the activities planned which are explained in this information note or others.
- You have interesting projects in the area of poverty you would like to share with others.

As in previous years, there will be activities at national and European level, involving civil society, local and regional authorities. Measures include information, awareness-raising and educational campaigns, surveys and studies, innovative schemes to promote social inclusion, meetings and events, and competitions to identify success stories. This offers a wide variety of opportunities for foundations to get involved at European level as well as in the 29 countries taking part in the Year (EU Member States, Norway and Iceland).

1. National level

Current state-of-play

In all participating countries, except in Latvia, a **National Implementing Body (NIB)** has been appointed to define and manage the European Year activities and to select the initiatives that will receive funding.

Most of the **national programmes** submitted by the participating countries to the Commission regarding the implementation of the European Year in the country are now adopted or under review and can be found at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=808&langId=en>

Recurrent issues and themes that appear in the national programmes are as follows: access to quality work and learning opportunities, access to services, child poverty, people with disabilities, urban and/or rural development, migration and ethnic minorities, travellers, housing and homeless.

Some of the NIBs have already launched the **calls for proposal for projects to be co-funded at national level**; the rest will do it in the near future.

How can you get involved?

The national programme of your country includes all relevant information regarding the implementation of the Year in your country: issues covered, structures in place, activities, budget available, funding opportunities. Building upon the programme, you may consider the following ways to get involved.

- **Become a partner of the National Implementing Body in your country.** NIBs should include, regularly consult and closely cooperate with CSOs for the design and implementation of the Year. Contact the NIB to analyse possibilities for cooperation building upon the national programmes.
- **Apply for funding for projects.** NIBs will select the projects that will receive funding at local, regional and national level through the calls for proposals that they are currently launching. At the meeting Commission representatives mentioned a number of issues to be taken into account when designing projects/initiatives: to pay attention to the content; to provide information on facts and data that illustrate and/or justify the importance of the issue; to try to reach target groups who are not usually covered

(preach to others than the converted); to work with media as a “multiplier”; to use communication tools, creativity and innovation.

- **Co-fund and sponsor initiatives planned at national level.** Project under the auspices of the European Year must be co-funded. This can be topped up with unlimited private funding. Foundations can also sponsor projects not supported by any public funding.
- **Take part in the events that will be organised at national level.** Information about these events can be obtained in the national programmes or directly from the NIBs.
- **Organise your own events and use the Year as a “hook” to advance the priorities on your agenda.** It will be possible to have media coverage and visibility for national projects through the European Year website and communication tool. However, it is important to bear in mind that in some case it may be necessary to work with the NIBs to enjoy this media coverage/visibility.
- **Build coalitions with civil society organisations and other stakeholders.**

2. European level

Current state-of-play

EU activities will include a common logo, events, information and awareness raising activities, European competitions, etc. A broad **communication campaign** has been launched to raise awareness on the poverty and social exclusion and to provide more visibility to EU and civil society projects. The key tool will be the official website of the Year (www.2010againstopoverty.eu) to be launched on 29 October 2009. Other tools will include a promotional leaflet, a introductory video on the Year and another one on how to tackle stereotypes.

Several **background publications** will be published. They include two eurobarometer surveys on issues related to the year, the publication “Being poor in a rich EU” -with fact and figures- and a recompilation of testimonies on life stories on pathways to get out of poverty. Another tool is focus groups of people experiencing poverty.

The Commission is currently working with relevant stakeholders on the organisation of a series of **events**:

- 29/10: Conference [“Poverty between reality and perceptions: the communication challenge”](#) (Brussels)
- Opening conference (21 January, Madrid) and closing conference (December 2010, Brussels)

Two **“Focus weeks” at EU level** will take place during the Year with the aim of creating a momentum and giving more visibility to the Year at two different moments. The first focus week (17-30 May) will be linked to the annual meeting Roundtable on poverty and social exclusion; the second (11-24 October) will correspond with the International Day against Poverty on 17 October and will aim to create enough political pressure to have a declaration at the end of the year. Some countries have decided to hold focus week at national level.

Other activities will include a **journalist competition** (March-October), which will first take place at national level and then at European one, and an **art exhibition** (March-October).

How can you get involved?

The EFC is analysing the opportunities to give visibility and promote EFC members and foundations’ work in the context of the EU level activities. Specifically, we are reviewing EFC’s contribution to the Focus Weeks. If you are planning and/or interested in taking part in any of the initiatives mentioned above or you have interesting projects in the area of poverty that you would like to promote, please contact the EFC secretariat at eu@efc.be.

EU stakeholders concerns

Several members of the **EU Stakeholders Expert Group** shared with the Commission a series of concerns regarding the implementation of the Year.

- The way the year is organised only allows for the involvement of CSOs at certain moments or in certain parts of the Year.
- At national level, CSOs involvement has been based on the efforts of interested parties rather than on the existence of a real mechanism for engagement. There are also several challenges regarding the way the funds are allocated- calls for tender are launched too late, are unclear and have short deadlines; some activities are already planned/allocated before the call is launched, etc.
- Gender equality, one of the transversal dimensions of the Year, has not been given enough relevance in the national programmes and the input of women’s organisations to the plans has been very limited.
- The creation of a fund for people working in the area of poverty and social exclusion as well as provide technical assistance at EU level should also be foreseen.

Action Point

EFC members planning and/or interested in getting involved in the European Year at national or European level or which have interesting projects in the area of poverty worth sharing with the others are invited to contact the EFC secretariat at eu@efc.be.

Further details on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion are available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=637>